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Good Morning,

There is a lack of understanding in our schools when it comes to children with Dyslexia. There is also a lack of support to help teachers attain the kind of training needed to help these children. Adding the term "Dyslexia" to an IEP will guarantee the right help for children.

My name is Jean Sawicki from Mansfield, CT. For the past 20 years, I have provided evaluations and instruction on behalf of individuals with Dyslexia. As a former English teacher at the secondary level, I became aware of students who were not reading at grade level and seemed to possess very poor skills. I was unable to help these students learn to read or improve their reading skills because I hadn't been trained to do so. I was unaware of their difficulties as well as what these deficits represented. Even if I had figured out that the students struggled with Dyslexia, I did not know how to help them at that time.

Although I have a Bachelors Degree in English and Secondary Education, and a Masters Degree in Education with a focus on Learning Disabilities, I was still unprepared to identify and help students with Dyslexia. I found a program at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston that provided training for Reading Therapists who would be able to work directly with individuals with Dyslexia. This training consisted of 300 hours of mostly supervised instruction with students.

The need for well-trained instructors became quite clear when I was asked to work with Dyslexic children from 1st grade through high school by many Special Education directors or by parents of these children. When given appropriate help, children made wonderful gains in reading and spelling, but mostly, they gained confidence in their abilities that had been lost. If 1 out of 5 students have Dyslexia, and 80-85% of children in Special Education are there due to deficient reading skills often caused by Dyslexia, we are ignoring and failing an enormous pool of potential talent that can contribute to society. This is unacceptable and totally unnecessary if we demand that the appropriate steps are taken to deal with this disability rather than to continue to ignore it. Merely adding a box on an IEP for Dyslexia accomplishes nothing.

Recommendations:

1. Require school Administrators to read the research on Dyslexia and to become aware of the effects it can have on academics and a child's self-esteem
2. Provide *Special Education Teachers* with support from their Administrators to complete the specialized training needed to help the children struggling with Dyslexia in their schools
3. Provide on-going professional development for Teachers that is geared toward improving their understanding of Dyslexia, recognizing early warning signs, providing proper assessment, and ultimately developing appropriate individual instruction plans for children with Dyslexia